

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 21-36, 38-41, 43-52 and 62-65 are pending in this application. By this amendment, Claims 35 and 36 are amended; Claims 63-65 are added; and no claims are canceled herewith. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 35, 38-39 and 41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,022,672 to Ikeda in view of EP 0275126 A2 to Yoshihide; Claim 36 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ikeda, Yoshihide, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,723,259 to Oikawa; and Claim 40 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ikeda and Yoshihide and further in view of JP 10-256344 to Tateyama.

The applied art does not teach or suggest a reaction inhibiting section for controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited with regard to the resist which is coated onto the substrate and is exposed according to an area of the substrate and a controlling section calculating a dew point in the reaction inhibiting section based on the indicated temperature and humidity and controlling the temperature in the reaction inhibiting section so that the temperature is not lower than the dew point, as recited in Claim 35. Additionally, the applied art does not disclose that the interface section includes a reaction inhibiting section placed a position nearer to the aligner side, and includes a chill plate for controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited, as recited in Claim 36.

As such, in order to inhibit a reaction, it is important to control the temperature of the chill plate so that the temperature in the interface station is not lower than the dew point.

This feature is not taught or suggested in the applied art. The Office Action asserts that Yoshihide discloses the feature of a reaction inhibiting section as recited in the claims. However, Yoshihide merely discloses a temperature controller such that an entire area of the resist film is kept at a uniform temperature. Again, the applied art does not teach controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited with regard to the resist which is coated onto the substrate and is exposed according to an area of the substrate.

Similarly, the applied art does not teach or suggest cooling the area of the substrate where a beam is emitted earlier in time in the aligner to a lower temperature, as recited in Claim 63, or cooling the area of the substrate where a beam is emitted earlier in time in the aligner earlier, as recited in Claim 64. As discussed on pages 96 and 97 of the present specification, the above discussed claim features provide at least the advantages of avoiding time lag when cooling extent is changed according to an area of the wafer. That is, an area where the beam is emitted earlier in time in the aligner, may be cooled to a lower temperature. The applied art does not teach or suggest the claimed features discussed above and therefore, cannot provide at least the advantages discussed above.

Oikawa does not make up for the deficiencies of the applied art discussed above. Specifically, Oikawa merely discloses a cooling buffer, but does not disclose a reaction inhibiting section as recited in the claims.

Finally, none of the applied art teaches, discloses or suggests that the first interface station has a first area before exposure and a second area after exposure, the apparatus includes a partition plate shutting off the second area from the first area, and the reaction inhibiting section is provided in the reaction inhibiting section, as recited in new Claim 65.

Consequently, for at least the reasons discussed in detail above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed

to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
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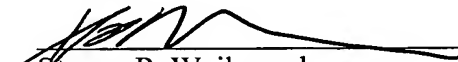
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